DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 053 850 RC 005 541

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TITLE Status Mobility Patterns Among Middle-Class Mexican Americans in Texas: A Theoretical Orientation.
PUB DATE 28 Aug 71
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at annual meetings of Rural Sociological Society, Denver, Colorado, August 28, 1971

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation, *Conceptual Schemes, Cultural Isolation, Ethnic Status, *Lower Class, Lower Middle Class, *Mexican Americans, *Middle Class, Research Needs, Socialization, *Social Mobility, Theories
IDENTIFIERS Texas

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to analyze what social characteristics may account for the Mexican American's "apparent slow rate" of both upward mobility and assimilation into the dominant American culture, this paper postulates a conceptual model of Mexican American mobility patterns that is based on theories of socialization, the marginal man, acculturation, and assimilation. One figure and 40 footnotes are included. Related documents are ED 032 157 and ED 042 556. (BO)

ED053850

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STATUS MOBILITY PATTERNS AMONG MIDDLE-CLASS MEXICAN AMERICANS IN TEXAS A THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

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*A paper presented at the annual meetings of the Rural Sociological Society, Denver, Colorado, on August 28, 1971.

RC005541

Abstract

In past years sociologists have devoted little attention to the second largest ethnic group in the United States, Mexican Americans. In general, those studies undertaken were devoted primarily to descriptive studies of immigrants and the lower class Mexican-American subculture. An extensive review of available literature reveals an increase of scholarly publications pertaining to the Mexican American in more recent years. However, these studies also are concerned primarily with the lower class. Very little information exists concerning the middle-class Mexican American, and what is available consists primarily of generalizations from data acquired through studies of lower-class Mexican-American education, aspirations, values, and cultural traits. Consequently, two major questions concerning mobility patterns among Mexican Americans remain unanswered: (1) What social characteristics predominate among Mexican Americans which may help to account for the apparent slow rate of upward mobility among Mexican Americans and (2) Does upward mobility in fact lead to assimilation of Mexican Americans into the dominant American culture. This paper presents a theoretical orientation, accompanied by a conceptual model, which approaches an answer to these questions.

PROBLEM

It is the general consensus of students of social mobility that members of ethnic groups in the United States who are upwardly mobile become assimilated into the dominant American culture and subsequently lose their ethnic identity. It is felt that this is especially the case with individuals who have acquired the necessary educational experience and occupational position and have become acculturated to middle-class American values. Also, it is generally agreed that this process of upward mobility usually begins with the second, and subsequent, generations of immigrants to the United States. Duncan, for example, on the basis of a study of residential patterns of ethnic groups in Chicago for the years 1930 and 1950 found substantial support for the hypothesis that there exists "a positive correlation between assimilation and length of time that the immigrant group has been in the United States."[1] Similarly, Warner postulates that as increasing numbers of individuals in an ethnic group achieve middle-class status this process of vertical mobility serves "to destroy the ethnic subsystems and to increase assimilation."[2]

Several sociologists have sought to apply these two positions concerning upward mobility to the Mexican-American population. As early as 1934 Bogardus predicted that as one moved away from first generation Mexicans in the United States that assimilation would increase.[3] He noted that "while their grandparents speak chiefly Spanish, while their parents speak both Spanish and English, they (third

generation Mexican Americans) are refusing to speak Spanish. They are surely more assimilated than were the preceeding generations... the third-generation Mexican Americans are better assimilated than the second, and of course, than the first generation."[4]

This position was again postulated in the late 1940's and early 1950's. In 1949 McDonagh stated that "the chances are good that in the United States the combined status levels for the Mexican will improve."[5] He also observed that although lower-class Mexican Americans were frequently discriminated against in education and occupation, they did enjoy legal privileges the same as whites as opposed to observed legal discrimination against blacks. John Burma implied an even more positive position. He predicted in 1954 that as second generation Mexican Americans increased in number that "social equality (would) become more a matter of personality than of nationality."[6] Burma observed that as Mexican Americans achieved middle-class status many of them moved away from the ethnic enclave and tended to lose their identity with it as they became increasingly assimilated.[7]

The classic example of this position was provided by Broom and Shevky. Referring to that specific period in time the authors wrote that "those individuals (Mexican Americans) who have advanced substantially either economically or in educational status, have tended to lose their identity with the group..."[8] The authors did, however, point to several factors which they felt could conceivably result in the assimilated and vertically mobile

elements remaining within the ethnic group. Among these were ethnic nationalism, culturally modified Catholicism, Mexican patriotism, and persistent interest in ancestral culture. Broom and Shevky postulated three possible directions that the Mexican American population could go after 1952, dictating either cultural and institutional isolation or functional integration: (1) continued isolation of atomistic enclaves; (2) emergence of an integrated ethnic community; or (3) reduction in the isolation of the Mexican-American society, their incorporation in the larger society, and progressive liquidation of ethnic enclaves.[9]

Of more recent origin is the position taken by Samora, et. al. in the publication Mexican-Americans in the Southwest.[10] They predict that, although slowed down by the prohibition of immigration, second and later generations of Mexican Americans will slowly become assimilated.

The scholars cited above generally agree that as second and later generations of Mexican Americans emerge increased vertical mobility may be expected and subsequently increased assimilation of Mexican Americans into the dominant American cultural system. Other writers, however, have refuted this position. As early as 1930 Gamio discussed the inability of Mexicans to achieve vertical social mobility due to their inability to intermarry and as a consequence of other discriminatory patterns including a lack of opportunity to acquire adequate education.[11] He pointed out that there can be no comparison between Mexican Americans and immigrants from Europe and their children as "these latter can ascend to the highest social strata

of the nation" whereas Mexican Americans are bound to lower-class status by discriminatory patterns.[12]

More recently Penalosa observed that "as Mexicans go up and out of the strictly Mexican-American colonia they remain loyal to the Mexican identification"[13] and that ethnocentrism among upwardly mobile Mexican Americans is stronger than might be expected. Even more significant is Penalosa's finding, based on empirical data, that second generation Mexican Americans are either more likely to be downwardly mobile (27.2%) or stationary (31.3%) than upwardly mobile (40.1%), contradicting the general assertion that upward mobility among in-migrant groups increases from one generation to the next.[14] Penalosa further observed that the trend toward downward mobility apparently increases, rather than decreases, among subsequent generations of Mexican Americans. Several writers also indicate that although members of an ethnic group may be upwardly mobile, this does not necessarily dictate that they will become assimilated into the dominant American culture. They point out that frequently such an individual becomes acculturated, but not assimilated, retaining identity as a member of the ethnic subsystem. Gordon has referred to this as an "ethclass"; i.e., individuals who remain members of an ethnic subculture while adopting the middle-class or upper class values of the dominant cultural group.[15]

In order to explain why several of the writers referred to above predicted the progressive assimilation of Mexican Americans and to further provide a basis for defining the current problem, it is

expedient to interject at this point a brief discussion of the historical immigration pattern of Mexicans into the United States.

Census figures indicate two peak periods of immigration from Mexico. Burma notes that when World War I cut off immigration from Europe inducing Southerners, white and black, to move to Northern industrial centers, a large number of Mexicans immigrated, settling in the Southwest. Mexican immigration persisted in diminished numbers through the 1920's and 1930's. During the 1940's large numbers of Mexicans were encouraged to immigrate to the United States due to the increased need for agricultural and railroad workers. Immigration persisted after the 1940's, but again in lesser numbers. Bogardus in the 1930's and then McDonagh, Burma and Broom and Shevky around 1950 made their predictions in the post-peak periods of immigration. If the Mexican immigrants had followed the pattern of other immigrants during these periods, increased upward mobility and, subsequently, increased assimilation of Mexican Americans could have been expected. The second generation of the World War II Mexican-American immigrants has just begun to reach maturity today.

With regard to the preceeding discussion, indications are that upward mobility among Mexican Americans is currently increasing, though rather slowly when compared to other immigrant groups. More so, increasing numbers of Mexican Americans are achieving middle-class status.[17] However, the question as to whether or not this increased upward mobility leads to assimilation of Mexican Americans into the dominant American culture remains unanswered. Also,

information which does exist regarding this subject is ambiguous. Furthermore, extensive interviews with middle-class Mexican Americans have revealed that even members of the Mexican-American population are uncertain as to what degree upward social mobility is taking place and what effects it has on those Mexican Americans who do move up.

Two major questions, then, remain unanswered: (1) What social characteristics and cultural patterns predominate among Mexican Americans which may help to account for the apparent slow rate of upward mobility among Mexican Americans and (2) Does upward mobility in fact lead to assimilation of Mexican Americans into the dominant American culture?

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

In his discussion of reference group theory, as presented in Social Theory and Social Structure,[18] Merton develops a concept which he has designated anticipatory socialization. As presented by Merton anticipatory socialization involves taking a positive orientation toward the values and attitudes of a group to which the individual aspires membership but does not belong. As an empirical example of this concept Merton cites evidences from The American Soldier[19] which indicated "that those privates who accepted the official values of the Army hierarchy were more likely than others to be promoted."[20]

It is noteworthy that Merton presents anticipatory socialization as having both functional and dysfunctional consequences for the individual, as well as the group. He argues that anticipatory

socialization

> Is functional for the individual only within a relatively open social structure providing for mobility. For only in such a structure would such attitudinal and behavior preparation for status shifts be followed by actual changes of status in a substantial proportion of cases. By the same token, the same pattern of anticipatory socialization would be dysfunctional for the individual in a relatively closed social structure, where he would not find acceptance by the group to which he aspires and would probably lose acceptance, because of his out group orientation, by the group to which he belongs.[21]

This latter situation is analagous to the marginal man concept.

In regard to the Mexican-American population, and more specifically upward mobility of Mexican Americans, anticipatory socialization could help to account for several of the problems raised previously in this paper. Several writers have indeed utilized this theoretical orientation in the analysis of upward mobility patterns of not only the populace in general, but specific ethnic groups as well. Anticipatory socialization alone, however, cannot account for some assumed peculiarities related to upward mobility among Mexican Americans. For example, why is it that some middle-class Mexican Americans apparently assimilate into the broader American cultural system while others specifically retain identity as Mexican Americans? Or, why is it that some Mexican Americans are willing to chance becoming marginal men while others try so hard to prove their loyalty to the subculture? Consequently, additional explanations are required.

In an article recently published in the Pacific Sociological Review Lane and Ellis present a discussion of the uses and misuses of anticipatory socialization which provides considerable insight for the development of a theoretical model to explain status

mobility patterns among middle-class Mexican Americans.[22] In addition, they provide several alternative concepts which serve to broaden the application of Merton's original concept, particularly for such a theoretical model. In the discussion which follows, reference is made to applicability of these various concepts to the problem at hand; full discussion, as well as development of a theoretical orientation with an accompanying conceptual model, follows.

Lane and Ellis note that as originally presented by Merton the anticipatory socialization process "requires that the early learning take place in a discontinuous status-sequence and be brought about by the desire of the mobile individual to affiliate with the outgroup."[23] Current knowledge, however, indicates that this is not the case among Mexican Americans. Mexican Americans are not socialized at an early age to think in terms of upward mobility. Two factors help to account for this situation. First, upward mobility is frequently acquainted with becoming "Anglo," any indications of which draw harsh criticism from the subculture and possible rejection. Any individual who is upwardly mobile must initiate extra effort to prove he is still "Mexican-American" if he is not to face complete ostracism and contempt. Parents who openly motivate their children to be upwardly mobile subject themselves to the same criticism. Secondly, most Mexican-American parents are not equipped to prepare their children to anticipate middle-class status. Rather the individual matures in a lower-class family setting, is educated in an educational environment with lower-class peers, and associates with a subculture

which is strictly Mexican-American and does not tolerate other Mexican Americans who appear to be "Anglicized" or are attempting to become so. If anything, the socialization process is such as to encourage retention of identity with the Mexican-American subculture and pride in its values, attitudes and traditions.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that the upwardly mobile Mexican American who projects an extra effort to display identity with the subculture is tolerated. More so, such individuals are frequently referred to as examples of successful "Mexican-Americans." Even so, this does not account for the second factor discussed above or, as Lane and Ellis have stated: "The empirical problem... (which is) how persons are able to transcend their immediate learning opportunities and acquire mastery over norms and values to which they ordinarily would not have access."[24]

It should be remembered that the problem presented in this paper is concerned not only with change by Mexican Americans from the lower-class as reference group to the middle class as reference group but also with change from the Mexican-American subculture as reference group. Here again anticipatory socialization does not provide an explanation of why some Mexican Americans assimilate into the broader cultural system while others retain specific identity as Mexican-American even though they have achieved middle-class social status.

Lane and Ellis present several alternative concepts which may help to account for the situations presented above.

Situational socialization suggests that the establishment of effective social ties may account for the shift in reference group

identity. Through association with peers or other influential individuals who are members of the out-group the individual may acquire the necessary values and attitudes to initiate a change in reference groups. The writers present the following paradigm:

out-group social contact ⟶ social learning ⟶
out-group affiliative motive ⟶ social mobility

Situational socialization may help to account for Mexican-American mobility both in terms of upward mobility, as applied not only to Mexican Americans but to any upwardly mobile group, as well as assimilation into the broader American cultural system. An explicit example of the first would be education in a predominantly middle-class, "Anglo" school. Examples of the latter would be direct contacts with the Anglos through the individual's occupation, or perhaps during the process of acquiring a college education.

Routine socialization refers to circumstances wherein one or both parents are of middle-class origin but presently situated in a lower-class context. Thereby, the parents are acquainted with middle-class values and attitudes and the children are socialized within a middle-class family context because either one or both parents are trying to recoup original middle-class status. The paradigm presented by Lane and Ellis is as follows:

in-group social learning ⟶ social learning ⟶ social mobility

The application of this concept to Mexican Americans may be readily observed, particularly as regards upward mobility. Little

application can be seen to the assimilation process with the possible exception of mixed-marriages.

Post socialization. Lane and Ellis point out that the three concepts already discussed -- anticipatory socialization, situational socialization, and routine socialization -- all emphasize the affiliative motive as a prior step to social learning that takes place. Post socialization, on the other hand, suggests that mobility does not occur until after the individual has been able to alter his life circumstances. A quote from Blau emphasizes this point: "persons upwardly mobile in the occupational hierarchy who continue to associate largely with working-class people have changed their economic position but not their social affiliation."[25] The following paradigm helps to clarify this concept.

occupational mobility → out-group social contact →
out-group affilative motive →
social learning → social mobility

Particular merit is to be found in this concept as an explanation of upward mobility patterns among Mexican Americans. Even though lower-class Mexican Americans are not generally socialized to adopt middle-class values and attitudes. On the other hand, this does not imply assimilation, and may help to account for the fact that many Mexican Americans apparently retain identity with the Mexican-American subculture rather than assimilate into the broader American cultural system.

The above concepts are used, then, in the development of a theoretical proposition for analytical study of upward mobility of

Mexican Americans as well as patterns of assimilation into the broader cultural system. However, creation of a more complete theoretical propostion required that brief attention be devoted to two other conceptual areas. The first area concerns the marginal man concept, the second a distinction between the concepts acculturation and assimilation.

The Marginal Man

The marginal man concept is particularly relevant in the development of the theoretical concept related to Mexican American mobility which is presented below. Identified first by Rober Park[26] in 1928 the applicability of the marginal man concept to the study of race relations was advanced in 1935 by Stonequist in his often noted article "The Problem of the Marginal Man."[27] As defined by Park, and subsequently Stonequist, the marginal man is one who is "living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break, even if he were permitted to do so, with his past and his traditions, and not quite accepted, because of racial prejudice, in the new society in which he now seeks to find a place."[28] Stonequist notes that this situation may change as the result of either racial (biological) difference or cultural differences, or both. Of particular significance for an explanation of status mobility patterns among middle-class Mexican Americans is Stonequist's observation that this situation, marginality, is especially prevalent among the children of immigrants -- the second generation -- particularly when racial differences are

added to the usual cultural differences. Several examples are provided by Stonequist including Japanese, Jews, and Mulatoes.

More recently, Merton used the concept of the marginal man in his discussion of reference group theory and social mobility.[29] Merton's use of marginal man is to describe an individual who is "poised on the edge of several groups but fully accepted by none of them."[30] Unlike Stonequist's concept of the marginal man, who is generally rejected only by the out-group to which he aspires, Merton's marginal man is accepted by neither reference group. He is "rejected by his membership group for repudiating its values and unable to find acceptance by the group which he seeks to enter."[31] It is this latter concept which is particularly relevant in the development of the conceptual model presented in this paper.

Application of the marginal man concept, as defined by Merton, is threefold. First, both literature and extensive interviews reveal that the Mexican-American subculture strongly sanctions individuals who show intent of assimilation into the broader American cultural system. Furthermore, indications are that upwardly mobile Mexican Americans must exercise extra effort to show loyalty to the Mexican-American subculture as they frequently come under suspicion of becoming "too good to be a Mexican." Coupled with uncertainty of acceptance by the broader American social system, and therefore fear of becoming a marginal man, this conflict may be a definite factor inhibiting both upward mobility and assimilation.

Secondly, the intervening variable of early and extended association with middle-class Anglos may help to account for those

Mexican-Americans who become assimilated and, in effect, dis-associate themselves from the Mexican-American subculture. Such individuals, being more assured that they will not become a marginal man, may be more willing to break their subcultural ties.

Thirdly, if, as Merton postulates, an upwardly mobile member of the broader cultural system is in danger of becoming a marginal man -- and at least one empirical study indicates that this may be the case[32] -- upwardly mobile Mexican Americans must certainly face this situation. Being members of a subculture which is predominantly lower-class and one which is highly suspicious of its upwardly mobile members, these individuals face a definite possibility of becoming marginal men if (1) they cannot prove their loyalty to the subculture and (2) they are not accepted by the broader American social system.

Acculturation and Assimilation

Two other theoretical concepts which are of particular significance for the development of a theoretical orientation to explain status mobility patterns among middle-class Mexican Americans are acculturation and assimilation. Although commonly found in sociological literature these concepts are employed by various writers in sundry and ambiguous contexts. Therefore, in order to define their application in this paper, as well as to relate their significance as applied to Mexican Americans, a brief explanation of their use follows.

Acculturation, as used in this paper, implies "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come

into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."[33] More specifically, acculturation implies the adoption of values, attitudes, and physical traits of a reference group other than one's own reference group. When used in this sense, then,acculturation is not restricted to discussions of ethnic or nationality's groups, but may be used to explain phenomena within a given social system such as changes in values and attitudes among members of different social classes.

Assimilation, as used in this paper, implies more than just adoption of another reference group's values and attitudes. Rather, it incorporates identification with another reference group. As Shibutani has defined it, assimilation "refers to both the acquisition of the perspective of the dominant group and the attempt to identify with it. A person who is assimilating develops a new reference group; performs for an audience that transcends the minority group"[34] or his original reference group.

Based on these definitions, then it can be readily observed that it is quite possible for acculturation to occur without assimilation. Shibutani, for example, notes that "acculturation may take place without assimilation; minority groups may alter their culture but still retain consciousness of kind."[35] Similarly, Gordon points out that acculturation "is likely to be the first of the types of assimilation... (but that) this condition of 'acculturation only' may continue indefinitely."[36] Gordon goes further in emphasizing that

whereas acculturation involves extrinsic adoption of culture traits, assimilation demands intrinsic adoption of another culture or reference group."[37] Several examples from literature support this contention. Shibutani points out that the Negro middle class, while maintaining separate Negro cultural relationships, associations, memberships, etc., are comparable to the white middle class in terms of indices of class position, attitudes, values, life styles, etc. Gordon provides a similar example from studies of individuals of Italian origin. He observes that "...this second-generations' working-class Italian-American group is ethnically (and class) enclosed, structurally, but overwhelmingly acculturated to an American working-class way of life."[38] Warner, in American Life[39] provides a similar observation, noting that the American-born children of immigrants are irreversibly on their way to acculturation; though not necessarily assimilation. Warner further postulates that as this second generation of immigrants moves into the various socio-economic levels in America they "will proffer their unhesitating allegiance to those aspects of the American cultural system which are visible to them in their particular portion of the socio-economic structure."[40]

When viewed in this context, acculturation and assimilation have specific explanatory value in the development of a theoretical orientation concerning social mobility and assimilation patterns of Mexican Americans. First, and foremost, is the implication that upward mobility among Mexican Americans does not necessarily imply assimilation.

It is quite conceivable, as literature indicates to be the case with some other ethnic groups, that acculturation in terms of middle-class values, attitudes, and cultural traits may occur among middle-class Mexican Americans without assimilation. On the other hand, the distinction made between acculturation and assimilation should provide a means of identifying those middle-class Mexican Americans who are assimilated into the broader American social system. For, if assimilation incorporates the displacement of reference groups, those individuals who have disassociated themselves from the Mexican-American subculture and who identify themselves as part of the broader American social system may be considered to be assimilated.

Secondly, it may be postulated that middle-class Mexican Americans, as in the case of the Negro, exhibit the same values, attitudes and cultural traits as middle-class Anglos but that, contrary to earlier predictions in literature, this process does not necessarily dictate assimilation. As noted previously, several writers have predicted that as upward mobility increased among Mexican Americans increased assimilation would follow. Current indications are that this is not the case, rather that upward mobility leads to increased acculturation but not necessarily increased assimilation.

Synthesis.

The following presents a synthesis of the theoretical concepts discussed above for the purpose of developing a theoretical orientation to explain status mobility patterns among middle-class Mexican Americans. In order to more concisely define this theoretical orientation a conceptual model is provided. (See Figure One.)

Although this paper is concerned with middle-class Mexican-Americans it would be amiss not to define a position concerning mobility patterns between lower-class members of the Mexican-American subculture and the lower and working class of the broader American cultural system. As indicated in the model it is contended that mobility between the lower-class of the Mexican-American subculture and these two segments of the broader American cultural system is blocked. Literature suggests two processes in operation which serve to substantiate this position. First, socialization within the Mexican-American subculture is such as to promote strong identity with the subculture. Furthermore, as previously indicated, failure to conform to this system of norms generates negative sanctions by the subculture toward the offending individual. Secondly, literature indicates that the forces of prejudice and discrimination by members of both the lower and working-class segments of the broader American cultural system toward the Mexican American prohibit acceptance of the Mexican American into these reference groups. Therefore, a lower-class Mexican American who attempts assimilation into either the lower or working-class of the broader American cultural system would become a marginal man, rejected both by his subculture of origin and the culture to which he aspires.

Several of the social processes previously discussed should also serve to explain blocked intragenerational or intergenerational mobility from the lower-class Mexican-American subculture to the middle-class of the broader American culture. As already noted, the socialization process of the Mexican-American is such as to promote identity with

the subculture. Also, the negative sanctioning by the subculture discourages those who attempt to identify with the broader cultural system. However, unlike movement to the lower or working-class of the broader cultural system, another factor helps to suppress this type of mobility. Having matured and been socialized within the lower-class Mexican-American subculture the individual experiences little informal contact with members of the middle-class segment of the borader American cultural system. Consequently, the individual has no sure knowledge of whether he will be accepted should he attempt assimilation. Therefore, he too faces the possibility of becoming a marginal man, rejected by the Mexican-American subculture and not accepted by the broader American cultural system.

On this basis it is postulated that Mexican American of lower-class origin who experiences upward mobility -- either through occupation, education, or some other means -- will follow a vertical path: identifying as working-class or middle-class but retaining identity as a member of Mexican-American subculture.

It will be recalled from the previous discussion of anticipatory socialization that this concept involves the taking-on of values, attitudes, etc. of the reference group to which the individual aspires membership. It will also be remembered that several alternatives to this process were discussed, i.e., situation, routine, and post socialization. With regard to first generation working or middle-class Mexican Americans it appears that acculturation of middle-class values, attitudes, and cultural traits are the result of a situational or post

socialization process as opposed to anticipatory socialization. Several factors serve to support this contention. First, the socialization process within the lower-class segment of the Mexican-American subculture encourages acceptance of the values of that segment of the subculture. Therefore, it is postulated that processes of socialization leading to middle-class values, attitudes, and cultural traits will be the result of situational or post socialization rather than anticipatory socialization; situational socialization occurring, for example, in college or military service.

As previously noted there is substantial evidence to indicate that members of ethnic groups may be acculturated but not assimilated. On the other hand, assimilation is dependent on acculturation. Also, the question of whether or not upward mobility does in fact lead to assimilation of Mexican Americans into the broader American cultural system is plagued with ambiguous answers. In view of the preceeding evidence it is postulated that all middle-class Mexican Americans become acculturated to middle-class life styles in America. Subsequently, it remains to account for those middle-class Mexican Americans who have disassociated themselves from the Mexican-American subculture. Two factors may help account for this phenomena. First, if first-generation Mexican Americans who have achieved skilled working or middle-class status do acculturate to middle-class life styles, and existing evidence indicates this to be the case, they are then in a position to socialize their children as would any other middle-class parents. Although the parents may identify themselves as members of the Mexican-

American subculture, their children mature under a completely different set of values, attitudes, and life style than did they. This is not to say, of course, that these parents do not instill in their children identity as Mexican-Americans, but rather that the values, attitudes, and life style are different from those of the lower-class Mexican-American subculture.

Secondly, these children are frequently raised in predominantly "Anglo" neighborhoods. They attend middle-class Anglo schools, they associate with Anglo playmates, they may join predominantly middle-class Anglo associations such as Little League or Boy Scouts, and in general associate with a peer group which is predominantly Anglo oriented. Therefore, such an individual can more easily disassociate himself from the Mexican-American subculture as he is not faced with the uncertainty of becoming a marginal man. This is not to say, of course, that he will disassociate himself; but rather, that his chances of doing so are greatly increased. It is postulated, then, that those middle-class Mexican Americans (or in this case, Spanish-surnamed individuals) who have assimilated into the middle-class of the broader American cultural system will be of either skilled working-class or middle-class origin. Furthermore, failure of children of such families to learn Spanish almost precludes their identification with Mexican American subculture at any future time.

In summary, it is postulated that upward mobility patterns of Mexican Americans of lower-class origin are vertical as opposed to horizontal. It is also postulated that middle-class Mexican Americans

exhibit values, attitudes, and life styles similar to those found among middle-class members of the broader American cultural system. Furthermore, it is postulated that middle-class individuals of Mexican descent who have assimilated into the broader American cultural system are of skilled working class or middle class origin as opposed to lower class origin.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

While this paper is concerned with concepts involved in a conceptual model that would provide understanding of status mobility patterns among Mexican Americans, the design of research employing this model would need to take into account many other complexities. For example, the stereotype "Mexican American" involves numerous groupings of people with significantly different Spanish dialects, racial composition and other cultural patterns. This fact makes it necessary to treat each distinct group as a universe.

Another significant variable involves the relationship of the geographical area where the Mexican Americans are located with respect to the border. Large numbers of Mexicans along the border are regularly employed in border towns and cities. The constant stream of illegal entrants with little training and education tends to displace earlier entrants

who gained some skill and increased their earnings. These earlier "Mexican Americans" begin a northward movement which eventually results in Canadian communities of "Mexican Americans" who crossed two borders without legal permits. This continual infusion of Mexican immigrants into the Mexican American subculture gives this minority group an added dimension that to the writers' knowledge is not characteristic of any other minority group in the United States.

Finally, as noted in this paper, it appears that family socialization patterns play an important role in status mobility patterns among Mexican Americans. A comprehensive investigation of the family socialization patterns, therefore, would significantly add to the understanding of both mobility and acculturation patterns.

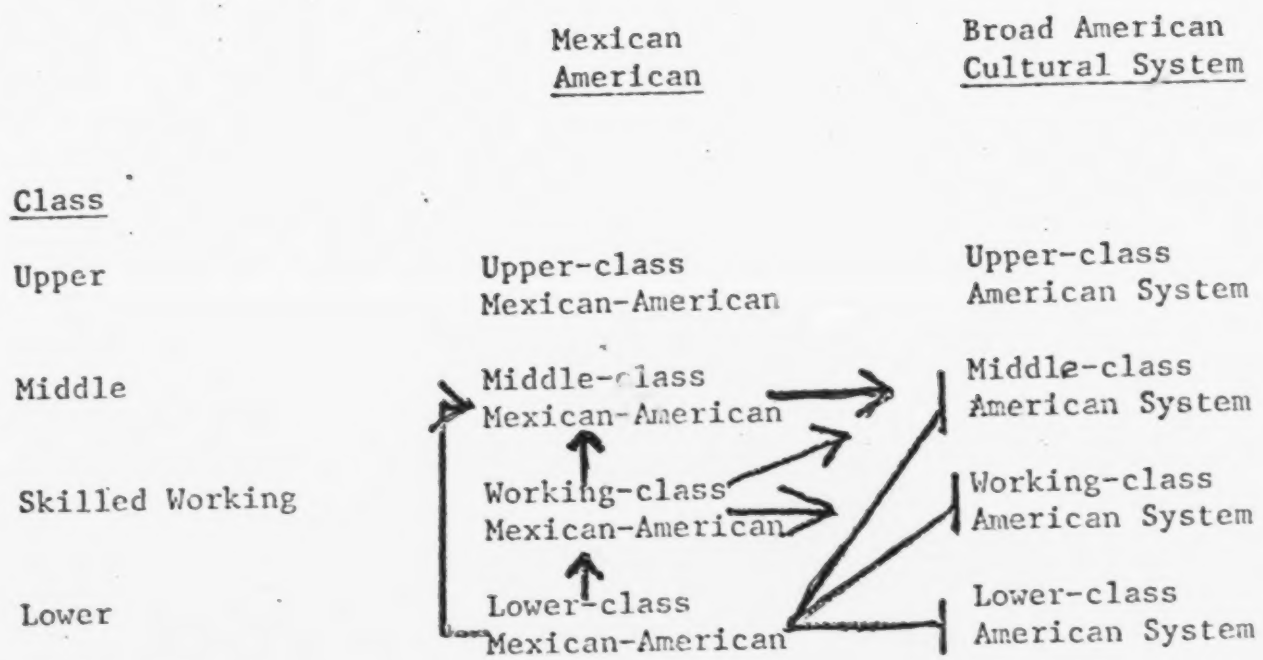

Figure One. A conceptual model to explain status mobility patterns among Mexican Americans.

→ Open social movement

⟶| Blocked social movement

FOOTNOTES

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